

WILLIAM ENSTON HOME, ENTRANCE GATE
900 King Street
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-686-F

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354F.

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM ENSTON HOME -- ENTRANCE GATE

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- Location: 900 King St., Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina. This structure faces southwest toward King Street, providing access to Canterbury Avenue.
- Present Owner: The Board of Trustees of the William Enston Home.
- Present Occupant: Unoccupied.
- Present Use: Entrance gate.
- Significance: The William Enston Home is an early example of benevolent, philanthropic housing for the elderly. Funded by a bequest of 1859, the complex was built between 1884 and 1888, with additional structures put up in 1893, 1927, and 1933. With its neat rows of detached, double cottages, set amid spacious, landscaped grounds, the Home provides an unusual and well-preserved example of nineteenth-century picturesque, suburban planning concepts adapted to this type of institutional function. On the regional level, few buildings in the Romanesque Revival style were built in this part of South Carolina; the Enston Home provides one of the pre-eminent local examples.
- The Entrance Gate was built in 1893 by prominent local contractor Robert McCarrel. Built of uncoursed granite rubble masonry, in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, it represents a departure in form and materials from the Home's earlier buildings.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1893. A copy of the original builder's contract is extant. It is dated 1893, although the month and day were left blank.
2. Architect: Not known. The contract names Robert McCarrel as builder. In the specifications, which also survive, the builder is charged "to give his personal superintendence to the work, and furnish all transportation, scaffolding, labor and material necessary for the performance of the work in the best manner, according to drawing and specifications." It not clear from either document, however, who furnished the design.

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3. Original and Subsequent Uses: Entrance Gate. The 1893 *Charleston Yearbook* stated that the "stone entrance lodge" was to be used for the accommodation of residents, waiting for the street cars."
4. Builder: Robert McCarrel. The words "Robt. McCarrel, Builder" are incised into one of the blocks of the lower beltcourse on the gate's north tower. According to the contract, McCarrel was to furnish specified materials, transportation, labor, etc., and to receive four payments totaling \$2,250.

Born in Scotland, McCarrel was one of the master builders of the University of Glasgow. After moving to Charleston he established a large and prosperous construction business. His firm took part in several notable Charleston building and remodeling projects, including the Post Office, the W. B. Chisolm House, the 8,000-seat Thomson Auditorium (built for the 1899 national reunion of the United Confederate Veterans), the Hotel Argyle, and various structures, ornament, and statuary for the buildings of the 1901 South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition. According to the *Yearbook*, between 1895 and 1900 McCarrel served on several municipal advisory boards.

5. Original Plans and Construction: Plans and drawings are mentioned in the specifications and contract, but they have not been located. The building is mentioned in the 1893 *Yearbook*.
6. Alterations and Additions: The contract called for the words "WILLIAM ENSTON HOME" to be carved on seventeen separate stones above the King Street side of the arched entry. While this was not carried out, in 1898 two bronze plaques were added, one on each tower. They read as follows:

--north tower plaque: "WILLIAM ENSTON HOME--1882."
--south tower plaque: "TO MAKE OLD AGE COMFORTABLE."

Inscribed in the lower right corner of each plaque are the words "The Henry-Bonnard Bronze Co. Founders. N.Y. 1898."

The 1895 *Yearbook* cites an expenditure of \$112 for "iron Gate and Guards." This ironwork, though badly damaged and deteriorated, is still in place.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Possibly influenced by such mature H. H. Richardson works as the Ames Gate Lodge and the Old Colony Depot (both built in North Easton, MA, in 1881), the 1893 Entrance Gate was made of uncoursed granite

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rubble, in a version of the Romanesque Revival that is more massive and simple than that of the comparatively delicate, fussy, Queen Anne-influenced cottages. The gate frames the view of Memorial Hall and the axis of Canterbury Avenue, providing both a monumental entrance and a sense of seclusion to the Home.

2. Condition of Fabric: Overall, the gate is in good condition. The interiors of the towers have been long neglected, though there has been no really serious damage. Windows in the towers are boarded up, and the wood doors are rotting. The ironwork gates, particularly that on the south tower, are rusted and broken.

B. Description of Exterior:

Standing about 20' high, and measuring about 30' x 10', the gate consists of two one-story octagonal towers, or guardhouses, linked by a round-arched entry way. The top of the wall above the arch is even with the roof line of the towers. A stone rubble slab supports the 14" thick load-bearing, uncoursed granite rubble masonry walls (bonded with white mortar). Cumberland buff granite (with red mortar) was used for the three rows of belt coursing, door lintels, window surrounds, entry arch, impost blocks, and cornice. The roof is flat. The builder's specifications called for it to be covered with "#14 copper, and furnish(ed) and fit(ted) with galvanized leaders." These leaders are still in place near the tops of the towers.

The towers are entered on their east sides by four-panel wood doors (two-over-two), approached by two slate steps. Two oval windows, now boarded up, with Cumberland buff stone surrounds, appear on the west side of each tower.

The 1895 wrought-iron gates, with a curvilinear wheel pattern, are still in place.

C. Description of Interior:

Each of the towers contains an octagonal space measuring about 7' x 5' and floored with poured concrete. Interior walls are brick plastered with cement and painted white. The 12' high ceiling is plaster over lath. There is no mechanical equipment.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

See overview (HABS No. SC-686).

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the William Enston Home was undertaken during the summer of 1993 by the Washington Office of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the National Park Service. The principals involved were Robert J. Kapsch, HABS/HAER Division Chief, and Paul

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D. Dolinsky, Chief of HABS. The project was sponsored by the Historic Charleston Foundation, Lawrence Walker, Executive Director, and Jonathan H. Poston, Director of Preservation Programs. Additional support was provided by the Charleston Housing Authority, Don Cameron, Director, and the Enston Home Board of Trustees, Park Smith, Chairman. The measured drawings were executed under the direction of Frederick J. Lindstrom, HABS Staff Architect. The field recording was conducted by Project Supervisor Douglas S. Anderson and Architecture Technicians John M. Biggs and M. Douglas Godfrey. Under the direction of Alison K. Hoagland, HABS Senior Historian, the historical report and written building surveys were produced by Keith L. Eggener, the 1993 Sally Kress Tompkins Fellow of the Society of Architectural Historians and HABS. Recognition should also go to Paul Helton, Superintendent of the William Enston Home, for his cooperation and assistance.

ADDENDUM TO:
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